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Meeting schedule
second half 1987

August 5th * Wed * 7 PM
September 5th * Saturday * 12 PM
October 7th * Wed * 7 PM
November 4th * Wed * 7 PM
December 5th * Saturday * 12 PM

ACE-STL Officers 1987
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ACE-STL NEWSLINE

VOLUME 3
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AUGUST 1987

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Next Month:

Sub Hunt ST
Graphic Shop 8 bit
New Adventure by Darel Schartman

SIG MEETING SCHEDULE
ACE MEETING - AUGUST 5TH
THORNHILL LIBRARY.
MIDI MUSIC - AUGUST 11 KOPCHAKS
ST SIG - AUGUST 12 RANDALL'S
GFA BASIC - AUGUST 24 RANDALLS
TELCOM - AUGUST 19 SHOEMAKERS
XE SIG - AUGUST 20 - RANDALLS

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Ratty's Rap

Mathew J.W. Ratcliff

Ratty's Rap - August 1987

I'm creating this month's report on a Toshiba T3100, a laptop PC AT with a 10 megabyte hard drive, plasma display, and 720K 3.5" floppy! This is the neatest toy in town! I'd love to see Atari package a version of the ST like this. If I had 4grand to spare, I think I'd purchase one of these Toshibas. Thanks to Lou Davis for the time on this super high tech toy!

I've just finished the product review on Easy Draw 2.06 for ST-Log. It is an excellent drawing program. It does not compare to Publishing Partner in the desktop publishing department, but then PubPard can't hold a candle to Easy Draw's drawing capabilities either.

In Easy Draw everything you create is an "object". Those objects can be circles or ellipses, pies or arcs. Once an arc is created, it may be edited, allowing you to adjust starting and ending angles from 0 to 360 degrees. Lines, boxes, and rounded boxes complete the tools for drawing. Whenever you click the right mouse button over your working window, the toolbox just POPS UP underneath your cursor. This is a slick technique that minimizes the movement of the mouse pointer for enabling options.

After your object is drawn, and you return to the edit mode, it remains selected. A selected object has a rectangle around it, with small squares on it to indicate where you can click and drag to resize it. While selected, you can change line type, thickness, fill patterns, and other features to see their effects on the object instantly.

Once you have created a few pieces of an object, they may all be selected by pointing and clicking on each while holding the SHIFT key on the ST. Then you can simply press ALT-plus to lock them into a group, giving you one

large object. They can then be sized together, retaining the same relative size and position. All other attributes for the group can be adjusted at the same time as well. If you need to pull any object out for individual treatment, pressing Alt-minus will "explode" the group back into its smaller components. The group handling features of Easy Draw are its strongest, making it a simple process to create a complete technical drawing much faster than doing the equivalent with the traditional T-square and analog, manual transcription device (i.e. pencil).

Easy Draw uses GDOS for its fonts and output to printer (or file, or screen). After all the bad press I've heard about GDOS from other developers, I wasn't expecting much. But Easy Draw is one of the most bug free programs I've ever tested on the ST! The printer driver is much faster than Publishing Partner (by virtue of the fact that it doesn't spend any time computing point sizes, a font definition is loaded for every point size used - memory hungry, but effective). Because Easy Draw uses GDOS, it seems to be growing rapidly with new features, fonts, printer drivers, and more all the time. GDOS does not have the capabilities to do all the neat things with fonts that we have come to take for granted in Publishing Partner, however.

Easy Draw is a neat package. If you have been frustrated with attempting to create technical drawings with the limitations of a graphics art program such as Degas Elite or Neochrome (no measurement functions, pixels instead of objects, etc.), then you NEED Easy Draw. Its price has been cut in half over the last year, to \$79.95. Stay tuned to the August ST-Log for more a more detailed review.

I've continued to study Lightspeed C for the 8bit, although I still have not

CONTINUED

Ratty's Rap continued

found time to do any compiling with it.

It does fully support floating point, but not in the standard method defined by C. You define floating point numbers as 6 character strings: char f1'6', f2'6'; for example. To multiply these floating point numbers, for example, Lightspeed supplies the following function: fmult(f1, f2);

Now that the Easy Draw review is complete, I've got a little time for programming. By next month I should have a report for you on the compile, link, and running capabilities of the Lightspeed C package. I have a nifty little graphics mode 9 dump utility for ASCII printers. It dumps a 16 gray level picture using nothing but ascii characters. Currently it is running in BASIC XL. By the September meeting I hope to have a Lightspeed C version up and running.

Wouldn't you like to IMPORT Word Writer or First Word files into Publishing Partner, while retaining ALL the attributes for the text, such as bold and italics? Well, that is my next project on the ST for SoftLogik. This will be a new importer accessory, that will read a Word Writer file and convert it to a Publishing Partner compatible file, with all text attributes in tact. After its completion, I'll get to work on an ST Writer version as well. The hurrier I go the behinder I get! Due to the new ST-Log magazine, ANALOG publishing has gotten about one month behind schedule over the past year, without being able to get completely caught up. If your July issue is a little late, don't sweat it. It will be coming as the July/August issue. In other words ANALOG will be dropping an issue (they already have somewhere, but the cover date has never caught up), but you will still get ALL issues coming to you on your subscription (i.e. the July/August issue still counts as only ONE magazine).

I'm sure this will hurt ANALOG somewhat, due to the loss of one month's advertising, but it is a necessity. The publishing company that has printed ANALOG/ST-Log from day one can no longer handle the job which has compounded ANALOG's scheduling problems. The transition to a new printer is being made as they put together the double issue. Starting in September, ANALOG and ST-Log should be on schedule with the cover date, finally. Your patience is greatly appreciated!

July 17 Update: I've heard that Megas are now showing up in the US and Canada, some with blitter, some without. Odd, but at least they're showing up.

John Skruch of Atari was kind enough to send me a whole stack of game cartridges for an article I'm developing for ANALOG called "Cartridge Classics". Many of these games will be rereleased when the new XEGS comes out. From an evening of game play I've found that Donkey Kong Jr. is the ultimate arcader's challenge, and a VERY true reproduction of the arcade original. Tennis is a more sophisticated game than you might think (you need the docs on this). Against the computer, you will hardly ever win, but this is a GREAT two player game - and you won't get tennis elbow playing it! (only joystick wrist!) Jungle hunt is fascinating, much faster and more sophisticated than Pitfall. Other Atari cartridge classics of all time include Star Raiders, Pole Position, Moon Patrol, and Joust! When they hit the market again (at a list price of \$20, probably \$12-15 in stores or mail order), these are MUSTS for any good gamer's collection.

Mat*Rat

MIDI SIG NEWS

DREG KOPCHAK

The american MIDI Users Group has been organized to serve as a national clearinghouse of information about MIDI and the use of computers in the performance and production of music. Membership is open to anyone, from the professional to the hobbyist, who is interested in the use of computers and music.

AMUG operates an international network of computer bulletin boards called MIDINET. The DMUG BBS, the home BBS of the MIDINET Network, may be reached via modem 24 hours a day at 1-214-276-8902. Much of the information on the BBS is available free of charge. For more information on the group call the BBS number above or write to American MIDI Users Group, 7225, Fair Oaks Ste. 515, Dallas, Texas 75231. Cost of membership in the group starts at \$20.00.

The ACE Saint Louis Club has a new music demo available in the club PD library. The disk is "It's a Small World", a collection of some of the best Disney pictures from the GENIE ST section. The pictures are displayed on the screen as the song "It's a Small World" plays. Output is set up for any 4 voice or more MIDI compatible synthesizer. Output is also sent to the internal sound chips of the ST so you don't need a synthesizer to run the show. This disk has become a favorite with my 2 year old daughter, Irene. If you have young children at home, I'm sure they will enjoy it.

We have a demo disk of the "Midisoft Studio" by the Midisoft Corporation available. The program is a real-time recorder for the ST. It can record up to 70,000 notes on a 1040. All 16 MIDI channels are supported on up to 32 active tracks of music. The Midisoft Studio will record all MIDI information: velocity, aftertouch, pitchbend, and program change; transmit and receive MIDI start, stop, and continue commands, and even MIDI song pointer commands. The demo is the entire program except that the save function is disabled and the program will only run for twenty minutes at a time.

For the 8-bit users we have a new disk of Music by Gary Gilbertson and Philip Price using their Advanced Music Processor. The disk includes some of their all time classics such as "Passionately" as well as some never released tunes including some out takes from the Alternate Reality game. The music Price and Gilbertson did for "The Tail of Beta Lyra" set a standard for game music on the 800 machines. The disk also has an address you can reach the authors at. It will play on any 8-bit machine.

A new MIDI driver for the 8-bit Hybrid Arts MIDIMATE interface has been released to the public domain this month. We will have the driver, the driver installed in a version of TURBO-BASIC, and some demo programs using the driver available for the September meeting. I wrote a short program using the driver to use the Koala Pad as a MIDI instrument.

The Little Green Football Stadium

by Charles F. Johnson - West Coast Editor ST-Log/Analog Computing

#3 - July/August 1987

I just received my copy of GFA BASIC 2.0. The good news is that at least some of the bugs have been fixed, in both the interpreter and the compiler. (Regretfully, however, some bugs remain!) For those unfamiliar with GFA BASIC (have you been living in Tibet?), I've gotta say that it's one of the nicest language packages for the ST I've seen. The interpreted mode is (amazingly) nearly as fast as compiled, the text editor is very useable, and the language itself is almost unbelievably rich in commands --- over 200, in fact! Combine this with support for many of GEM's features (such as windows and alert boxes), and a compiler that creates .PRG files that run without GFA BASIC, and you have a fairly complete and undeniably user-friendly development system for the ST.

Unfortunately, the first release of GFA BASIC had some problems. Occasionally, after running GFA and exiting, other programs would mysteriously crash. Also, when you would open a window, you would often notice "sticky" mouse button clicks when you tried to operate the slider bars. The compiler also had some problems...programs that were compiled on a machine with 1 megabyte would not work on 512K STs, or if they did work, they would cause an address error (two bombs) upon exiting back to the desktop.

Well, the new version seems to have fixed most of these problems. I've been testing version 2.0 with lots of programs that previously would die miserable deaths...and whatever was happening to cause the mysterious crashes has been repaired. The compiler now works equally well in any memory environment, as well. In addition to the bug fixes, the new manual is a large improvement over the (terrible!) original. Overall, I'm very happy with version 2.0 of GFA BASIC...in fact, in some ways I find it preferable to C for program development.

BUT...(you knew there was a "but", didn't you?)...one of the most annoying GFA problems remains un-fixed in version 2.0. It's very easy to set up GEM drop down menus with GFA, but when you use menus on a color monitor, there is a distracting blank line between the bottom line of the menu titles and the start of the drop down menu. This peculiarity is non-fatal -- it doesn't actually cause any crashes. But it's unsightly, and I have to wonder why it wasn't fixed in the new release, especially since it's so darn OBVIOUS??? In some GFA-related news, Paul Chinn has recently posted on Delphi a GEM/AES library for GFA BASIC which lets you use all AES functions (event calls, dialog boxes, resource files, etc.). Much thanks to Paul for this tremendous aid in developing GEM-based programs with GFA BASIC. You can find this file in the ST Programs Database.

The monochrome version of Sublogic's Flight Simulator II has recently been released. I actually prefer the mono version to the color...the graphics seem sharper, and the menus are extremely crisp and readable. I couldn't detect any differences between the two versions, aside from this. (Yes, the monochrome version still lets you taxi right out onto the water of San Francisco Bay...oops!)

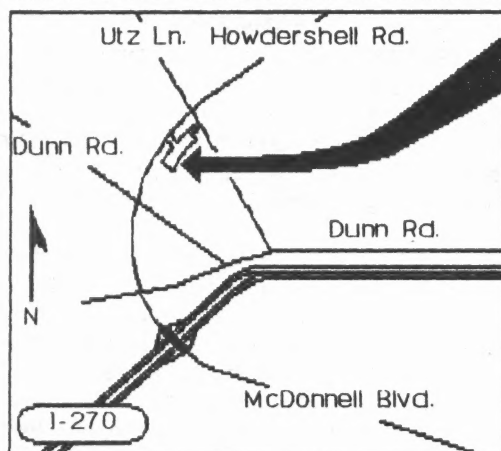
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Randall's Home Computers

We now have PC-ditto for the ST! PC-ditto is a software program that allows you to run IBM software on your ST. With your club discount it is only \$80.96. See it demonstrated at the August ACE meeting or stop by our store to try it out for yourself. (Bring your own IBM software if you like)

Atari XL/XE owners, during August, Atariwriter Plus is only \$35 with your club discount and, Atari Planetarium is only \$25.



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FirstCADD ST

GENERIC SOFTWARE, INC Redmond, Washington

Reviewed by Ron Robinson

Generic Software has offered a very successful and widely acclaimed line of IBM PC CADD software over the past several years. This software consists of FirstCADD PC, a low cost entry level product, and Generic CADD, a full blown expandable CADD package. Generic has recently ported the entry-level CADD package to the Atari ST.

CADD stands for Computer Aided Drafting and Design. A CADD program is easily confused with drawing or paint programs like Degas or Neochrome. CADD programs allow you to input a drawing in actual dimensions, within an accuracy you specify. Objects exist on the drawing in terms of their dimensional definitions. The accuracy of an object is not limited by the resolution of your screen, or the size of the object. For example, if you draw a circle, it is defined by the location of the circles center and its radius. The CADD program can draw the circle on any device and take full advantage of the full solution of the device.

Drawing programs work with those tiny dots of light you see on your screen known as pixels. The pixels are essentially the units of your drawing. Anything you draw is defined in pixels. CADD programs work with objects or entities rather than pixels. Objects may include: points, lines, circles, arcs, rectangles, polygons, ellipses, curves, etc.. These objects are defined in real world units such as meters or inches.

The distinction between drawing programs and CADD programs becomes most obvious when you draw something and enlarge it. If you enlarge the view of a circle in a drawing program, the pixels that describe circle get bigger, making the line that describes the circumference look wider. In a CAD program, the circle itself will get bigger but the pixels describing the circle circumference remain the same size no matter how much you enlarge the circle.

CADD programs allow you to keep different types of information separate in the same drawing using layers. This is much like over-laying sheets of transparent paper, and provides a means to draw one object on top of another but yet maintain the integrity of each object. This allows you to easily make changes affecting objects in a particular layer without touching the rest of the drawing.

FirstCADD ST is advertised to be an entry-level, full-featured, two-dimensional drafting and design package for the Atari ST. It works with monochrome and color monitors. Printer drivers in several graphics densities are provided for a large number of dot matrix and laser printers.

FirstCADD is not a GEM application. You do not have access to the desk-top or GEM drop-down menus. A menu is provided identical to the IBM PC version. You can customize the menu file using an ASCII text editor to modify the menu to suit your particular application. You can shut off the menu to gain drawing space on the screen.

The program asks you for a file name (be sure to specify full path names here) and checks to see if the file exists. If the file is found, it is loaded and displayed on the screen. If it isn't found, the program asks you if this is a new file, and you are ready to start drawing.

Commands may be selected from the menu on the right side of the screen, or entered from the keyboard as two key commands. The configuration program allows you to program the function keys to frequently used commands. The left mouse button activates the pen, and the right button is used to select menu items. The upper left corner of the screen displays the absolute coordinates of the cursor or the cursor coordinates relative to the last point placed on the drawing. A status and prompt area across the bottom of the screen advises you of the program status. The cursor position on the screen is marked by a set of cross-hairs and controlled by the mouse.

The first thing you want to do is set up the drawing controls. The controls allow you to work in either English or metric units. The colors of all items, including lines, text and menus may be changed. Drawing size, tolerance, grid size, and visible layers may also be set. Many of these options can be automatically set by using the configuration program.

Drawings are formed using the simple objects provided on the drawing menu. Objects include: points, lines, rectangles, two and three point circles, polygons, three and four point arcs, ellipses, and complex (B-spline) curves. Points can be "snapped" to grid intersections or to the nearest point. Rubber banding causes a line to stretch across the screen once you place a point until you place the second point.

Objects can be edited once placed on the drawing by individual object, or from within windows. Objects can be moved, copied, erased or broken once placed on the drawing. When

FirstCAD ST - Continued

moving objects you are asked if you want straight line stretch. This allows you to make portions of objects larger or smaller and maintain interconnecting lines. Colors, line type and layers of objects can also be changed. Utilities are provided to measure the length, angle or area of objects on the drawing.

Display of the drawing is controlled by the zoom commands. You can zoom to where the drawing fills the screen, zoom to drawing limits, or zoom to a value where you manually set the screen ratio. Zoom up moves the viewing window closer to the drawing and zoom back is like getting further away from the drawing. The drawing can be "panned", which moves the viewing window over the drawing. Functions to redraw the screen, or reset the screen to the previous values are provided. A zoom window command lets you pick an area of the drawing to be displayed, and enlarges it to fill the screen.

FirstCADD has a great deal of text flexibility. You can create your own fonts. Text size, color and rotation can be specified. Text fonts may also be defined to be non-text symbols if desired.

One of the more powerful features of the program is the component function. Components are reusable symbols that can be placed on a menu, picked and placed on the drawing, and saved or recalled from a disk file. They consist of a group of lines that represent a single object. Components may be scaled, rotated or stretched prior to placement. Components are created by placing a window around an object, giving it a name and a reference point. Components are great for anything else that uses standardized symbols, such as architectural symbols or electronic components.

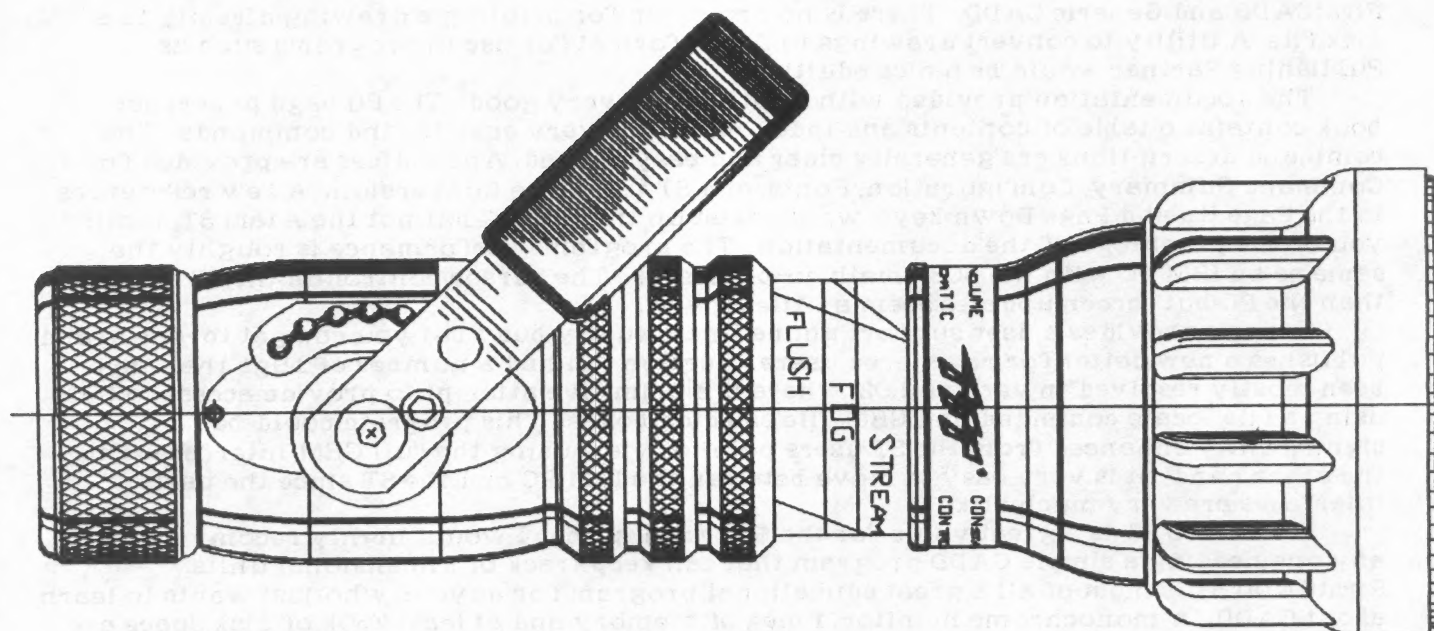
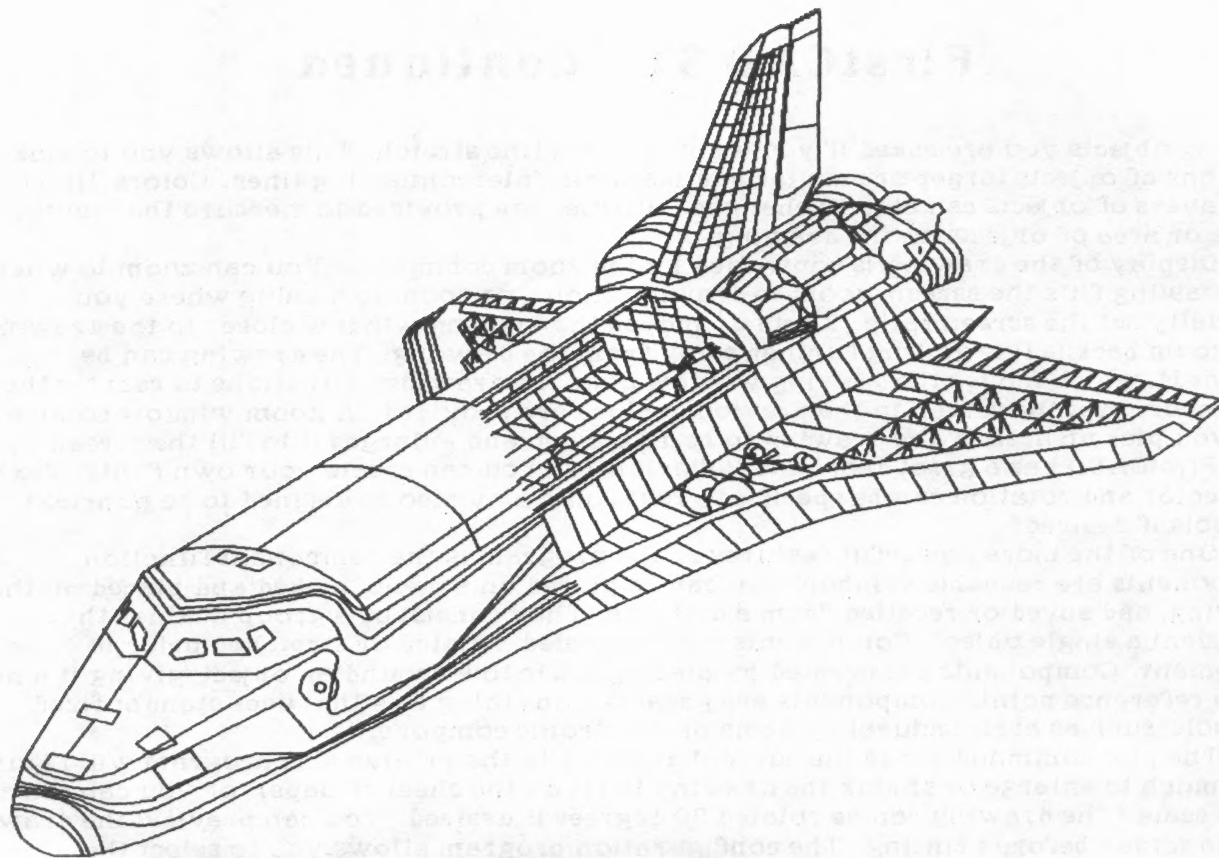
The plot command sends the current drawing to the printer. The program will figure how much to enlarge or shrink the drawing to fit on the sheet of paper, or you can select a print scale. The drawing can be rotated 90 degrees if desired. You can preview the drawing on the screen before printing. The configuration program allows you to select the resolution of your printout. The print resolution selection must be performed before starting FirstCADD. Be prepared for a long wait when printing a drawing.

Drawings can be saved to disk as a compacted drawing file or as a text file where all objects are shown, along with the coordinates of their points. A file conversion utility is provided to allow exchanging files between the Atari ST and the IBM PC version of FirstCADD and Generic CADD. There is no provision for printing a drawing directly to a disk file. A utility to convert drawings to Degas format for use in programs such as Publishing Partner would be a nice addition.

The documentation provided with FirstCADD is very good. The 80 page paperback book contains a table of contents and index making it very easy to find commands. The command descriptions are generally clear and easy to read. Appendices are provided for a Command Summary, Configuration, Fonts, and ST to PC File Conversion. A few references to the Page Up and Page Down keys, which exist on the IBM PC but not the Atari ST, remind you of the parentage of the documentation. The programs performance is roughly the same as an IBM PC with the 8087 math co-processor. The cursor control on the ST is faster than the PC but screen updates seem a little slower.

Generic provides a user support phone line (usually busy but you can get through) and publishes a newsletter for registered users. Version 1.01 had a number of bugs that have been mostly resolved in version 1.02. There is a primitive attempt to provide access to GEM using a file locate command and GEM file selector boxes. This program could be significantly enhanced from the ST users point of view using the full GEM interface. On the other hand, it is very easy to move between the IBM PC and the ST since the user interfaces are very much alike.

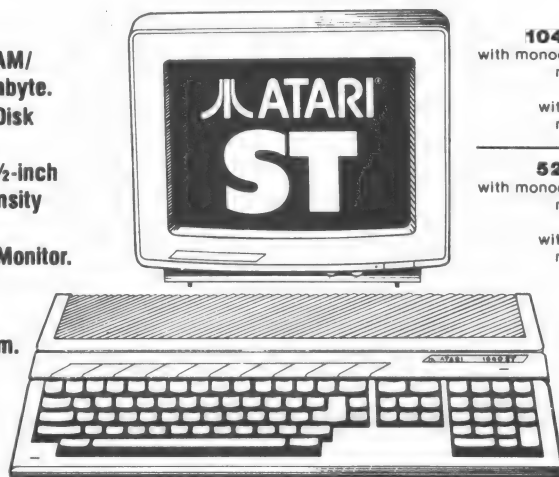
FirstCADD ST is a great value for the \$50 retail price. I would highly recommend it to any one needing a simple CADD program that can keep track of dimensional units. FirstCADD ST is most of all a great educational program for anyone who just wants to learn about CADD. A monochrome monitor, 1 meg of memory and at least 750k of disk space are recommended by the author for non-casual use of this program. Hopefully Generic Software will find a large enough market to justify developing the full GenericCADD version for the ST.



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ATARI STATUS REPORT

MADMODIFIER's Atari Status REPORT
- July 1987

NEWS FROM ATARI:

The Mega ST and the SX212 modem are at the last step before arriving. We have received pre-production samples.

These are the first units off the line with all the same components, packaging, and production techniques as the real thing. We get a small number of these to test and make sure there are no last-minute glitches. When we give the go-ahead, the next step is real production.

The Atari PC is looking likely for later this Summer. The XEP-80 (for the 8-bits) is waiting on one part which turned out to have an incredibly long lead time on orders -- once we have the part we'll turn these around ASAP. The SLM804 Laser Printer is waiting on one final component also, as well as the final version of the software drivers that support it.

New software from Atari includes the first titles in the Arrakis Advantage series of middle school level educational programs. There will be 17 in total, of which 4 have hit the stores already and the rest are in various stages of finalization.

Shortly after the SX212 modem hits, we will release an add-on package for 8-bit owners which is to contain an SIO cable and the program SX EXPRESS by Keith Ledbetter, as well as the new handler file. Of course, SX212 owners with the 8-bits can also use it through the 850 interface using existing terminal programs set up for Hayes-compatible modems.

The blitter chip is working and is in the pre-production Mega ST's mentioned above. The AMY chip is still in development, and may still see

the light of day -- some day. AMY is a stubborn beast.

Speaking of stubborn, Microsoft Write is also still in development. Nearly finished now, too, although a few small bugs remain to be expunged.

SHOW NEWS: Atari made history by becoming the first computer manufacturer to exhibit at NAMM, the National Association of Music Merchants show in Chicago. The ST was present throughout the show in virtually every booth where there were MIDI instruments. Atari sales people at the show were besieged by music dealers eager to sign up as Atari dealers. By the time this 4-day event was over, there were literally hundreds of dealer applications waiting to be approved. Before NAMM, Atari had 50 music stores as dealers -- it looks like there will be 250 when the new dealers are selected.

In other news from NAMM, Keyboard magazine announced the results of its latest reader survey. The Atari ST computer has rocketed into the #1 slot in the vital "Intent-to-buy" category ahead of perennial leader Macintosh! The word in Atari HQ is "Today MIDI -- tomorrow, Desktop Publishing!" (C) Copyright 1987 by Atari Corporation, all rights reserved. For the exclusive use of GENie members and Atari user groups. May be reprinted only with this notice intact.

CLOSE ENCOUNTER WITH THE MEGA ST4

BY Maurice Molyneaux

We've ALL been waiting what seems like forever for Atari to finally get its MEGA ST computers out the door. They were announced in January (seems like longer back, though), and only now does absolute proof of their existence appear to mine eyes in the form of an actual unit! Not only did I get to see one (Mega ST4) in the "flesh", but I got to sit down and play with it for quite a while. In fact, I ran something like 10 programs on it. My thanks to Neil Harris of Atari and Rod Coleman at Cimmaron Computers in Reno, Nevada, for the opportunity to play with this long sought machine. (Now, DON'T go calling Cimmaron and expect to order one, because as of this date -July 12- they don't have them yet. The one I saw was there for a special event and went back to Atari HQ several hours later.)

THE SYSTEM UNIT

This hasn't changed since the photos we've all seen. The main unit is a box, about 13 x 13 inches square and about 3 inches tall, with a double-sided 3.5 inch floppy drive in the front of the machine to the right. Interestingly, all systems lights on the unit I saw were GREEN. No red LEDs. The right side of the unit is blank, though the left side has an opening which reveals the connector for the keyboard cable just forward of the cartridge slot. Around the back of the unit are all the usual ports, and one interesting hatch, arranged as follows ("R" is the RESET button):

BACK VIEW

| ON/OFF POWER PROCESSOR BUS ACCESS ATARI | IR
| | MODEM PRINTER MIDI MIDI MONITOR FLOPPY DMA |

The interesting hatch is, as we've all been hoping for, an open line to a connector which gives access to the FULL 68000 bus, thus permitting simple memory expansion, and even the possibility for carrying the bus OUTSIDE the ST to where things like card slot equipped expansion boxes, multifunction peripheral boards, etc., can be added. Next to it, where I typed ATARI, is a small nameplate, which one magazine claimed was where a second DMA port could be added. I do not know if this is true. Finally, the Mega has a very quiet internal fan and a built-in battery backed up clock. I'd forgotten about the clock, but when one of my disks auto-ran a program to read the clock, I was suprised to see that it worked!

THE KEYBOARD

This is nearly the size of a 520ST, though slimmer and MUCH lighter. The keyboard is connected to the system unit by a cable which connects in a notch under the back left corner of the keyboard, which is where port 1 (joystick) is also located. The mouse port (O) is in a nitch under the center of the back of the keyboard. There is a narrow "channel for the mouse cord to follow, leading out the right side of the keyboard. If you are left handed, you simply ignore the channel, feed the cable out the back of the nitch, and it will easily go around the left side of the unit. These ports are much easier to get at than those on the 1040ST! The keyboard also has two flip out panels on its bottom, which are used to tilt the keyboard towards you. When closed, the keyboard lays quite flat. As to the keys themselves, they don't look any different, but they definitely ARE much tighter. It's not nearly so easy to trigger a key by brushing it. Even the function keys don't feel "mushy".

THE NEW TOS/GEM

Perhaps "improved" is a better word. The Desktop looks just like always. Same old stupid icons. The menus are the same, with the exception of the Options menu. where at the very bottom is an option called "Blitter"! If a check mark appears next to it, the blitter chip is ON, if not, it's inactive (more on this later). The Print Screen and Save Desktop functions now present Alert Boxes confirming if you wish to proceed or cancel. You can't set a drive for svaing the Decktop to, but at least this will prevent you from accidentally overwriting your current DESKTOP.INF file (which I seem to do about half the time I aim for "Set Preferences"). The first thing I tried was typing an underline in

CONTINUED

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS - Continued

the time/date area of the Control Panel, and, much to my relief, I WASN'T greeted by the three bombs which usually accompany this action with the old TOS. In fact, my best efforts proved insufficient to crash this machine. No file or I/O error I created caused a bomb. Hopefully this is a good sign. Neil Harris stated that the text handling routines had been overhauled, and even sans blitter, the text in windows seemed a bit quicker scrolling. Further, holding down the left mouse button which clicking on a window's scroll arrows or the gray areas of a scroll bar will result in a auto-repeat scroll. No more multiple clicks to scroll through a window. 1st Word benefitted from this, and when the blitter was engaged, seemed faster at going from end to end in a large file.

THE BLITTER!!!

I have been DYING to try this out for ages! Anyway, it's present in the Mega, and, by golly, it DOES work! On the Desktop, it seems to speed up window fills and screen redraws, though it's hard to tell. The "pop" of appearing and disappearing windows is the same, though I imagine that's because the routines are timed to one of the system clocks. Many users have voiced worries that the blitter would cause some of their programs to go crazy with speed. I found this shouldn't be much of a problem. I tested Starglider, Star Raiders, Crystal Castles and Battlezone, and all ran as always. Apparently, they too monitor system clocks, and are unaffected by the blitter. Maybe you're disappointed by not getting to play Star Raiders at Warp 45, but it keeps the games playable. However, the best example of the blitter at work was when the good old NEO-Bird demo was run. If you have it, run it, and notice how fast the cockatoo goes. Now, imagine him going between 4 and 5 times that speed and you can imagine what the blitter can do. Why, that chip could potentially make even the Aegis Animator ST's jerky cel animation halfway presentable!!! Shiney Bubbles and FujiBoink! showed no difference in speed. The system default is for the blitter to be "on", although Neil Harris told me that if a DESKTOP.INF file were present on my boot disk, the blitter would be disengaged. I imagine that Save Desktop now saves the status of the blitter as well, which could be indicated with a single bit for on or off.

A FEW FAILURES

While Charles F. Johnson's "Font-Trix" worked, an early version of another accessory of his (coming to ST-Log soon!) didn't. The machine got as far as drawing the menu bar and seized up. No idea why. Also, Beta versions of Broderbund's Art Director and Film Director wouldn't run. The error I got was something like "Not enough memory to run this application. Use TOS in ROM or remove all Desk Accessories before retrying." This on a 4-megabyte ST! I have a feeling this has something to do with memory addressing, and the error is generated when a free RAM check reveals a number out of the specified range. In this case, it could be that the some 3,850,000 bytes of free RAM was so big that the programs didn't realize what it really meant!

Programs I tried that DID work, apparently without a hitch, were: CAD-3D 2.0, Star Glider, Crystal Castles, Star Raiders, DEGAS Elite, 1st Word, NEO-Chrome, Battlezone, SLIDE.NEO (NEO-Bird), Shiney Bubbles, Fuji-Boink and Flash.

UNTIL NEXT TIME...

Neil Harris said the plan is to ship the Mega ST2 and 4 units in bulk in August. The Mega ST1 has been shelved, sparing the 1040ST from an early grave. As to blitter and TOS upgrades for the current ST models, I have no inside knowledge. Hopefully, another "close encounter" will be soon following, and when it does, all of you will be the first to know. Now, if you'll excuse me, it's late, and I'm going to bed... visions of blitter chips dancing in my head...

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CONNECT ? NEWS AND NOTES

by Steve Freshley

We've both gained and lost a BBS this month.

Bungalow BBS started just after press time for the last newsline, and has been going strong for about a month now. Jim McCulloch, the sysop is running Bungalow on the Express program. Give him a call at **351-2837**. He's running the board on floppies right now, but planning on going to the ICD MIO board in the near future. Bill Willis has taken down the **Chef's Kitchen**, and has no immediate plans for putting the board back up.

Hard drive mania and the MIO board have both been in the news this month, too. **Bob's Binary Shop** has brought a thirty meg hard drive online this past month, but the 86 meg hard drive **Frog BBS** had planned on got zapped by lightning during the recent thunderstorms. The **Pub BBS** is now running on a one meg MIO, the third local BBS to be using it. **Express BBS** has a Star Trek trivia game online, and expects to expand with more questions for the trekkies as well as several other games by the end of the year.

Spotlight: GATEWAY CITY BBS

Sysop: Terry Shoemaker Age: 34

Co-sysops: Jim Bucholtz and Mat Ratcliff

Gateway BBS is the second oldest active BBS in the area. Brought up by Jim Bucholtz slightly after A.U.R.A. in 1981, Terry took over in November, 1986, after Jim developed a severe case of sysop burnout. With features like 12 message bases and a large download area of both 8-bit and ST public domain files, **Gateway** will soon need to expand to a 20 meg hard drive from its current 10mb. Besides these features(11 of the message bases are accessible to all users), Gateway has recently received the permission of **Ron Kovacs**, one of the authors of **Z-mag**, to carry Z-mag on the board. For those of you that don't know, Z-mag is a weekly online newsletter carried by most of the pay services, containing the latest Atari news.

While not sitting in front of his monitor, Terry is a police officer, the administrative assistant to the Commander of St. Louis' 3rd District. Of course, he does manage to get a minute or two in with his wife, Marie, and their son, John. Although not a computer fanatic like Terry(she bought him his first Atari for Christmas in 1979), Marie joined the computer world with her two computerized sewing machines. Johnny, soon to be 2, loves to listen to digitized music, but is a bit too young to run dad off the computer yet.

You can reach **Gateway** at (314) 647-3290. The 11 message bases are bound to have a subject that interests you, as they cover everything from general chatter to sports to the latest Atari and ACE Club information. Give them a call, and post a message.

SUMMER READING

BY Charles Robinson

Tired of staring at the boob tube every night? Are all those computer games beginning to look alike? Maybe it's time to curl up with a good book (you remember those batteryless, non-volatile storage devices, don't you?). Here's a list of books that I've enjoyed lately -- give them a try and give that joystick wrist a rest! (If you can't quit the computer cold turkey, just think of these as non-interactive INFOCOM games!)

MODERN WARFARE:

Tom Clancy (Naval Institute Press, 1984) 'The Hunt for Red October' - A Russian nuclear missile sub is trying to defect. Can we find it before the Soviets? Very up-to-date on the latest in sub warfare and hardware. An exciting thriller! (330 p.) (also in paperback)

'Red Storm Rising' (Putnam, 1986) - After losing 50% of their refinery capacity, Russia decides to take the Middle East, after defeating NATO. The defeat of Europe hinges on gaining control of the Atlantic to cut off U.S. re-supply of NATO. Even more thrilling than HPRO! As up-to-date as the USS Stark! (736 p.) (also in paperback)

SCIENCE:

Kenneth J. Hsu (Harcourt Press, 1986) 'The Great Dying' - presents the evidence that a large meteorite caused the end of the dinosaurs. Gives a history of paleontology from its founding. Demonstrates how discoveries in other fields of science led to advances in this field. Explains how 65 million year old minor shifts in temperature, changes in CO2 levels, etc are deduced. (286 p.)

Richard Rhodes (Simon and Schuster, 1986) 'The Making Of The Atomic Bomb' - The DEFINITIVE history of nuclear physics and the development of the bomb. Traces the experiments into the structure of the atom starting with Rutherford through Fermi, Oppenheimer and the bombing of Japan. Also looks at the political aspects of WW II and the need for developing the bomb. A truly fascinating, highly detailed book! If you have any interest in science, read this book! If you never read another book, read this one! HIGHLY RECOMMENDED! DON'T MISS IT! (788 p.)

Richard L. Miller (Free Press, 1986) 'Under The Clouds' - The story of US above ground nuclear testing and the resulting fallout. Covers the exposure of a quarter million soldiers to nearby nuclear blasts, the deaths of civilians and farm animals from concentrations of fallout, the increases in cancer, and the suppression by the military and the Atomic Energy Commission of the harmful effects of fallout. (547 p.)

Related VIDEO: 'The Atomic Cafe' - Documentary of 1950's Civil Defense and public service films teaching 'duck and cover' nuclear 'safety', atomic tests, and military training exercises. Clips are presented as is, without comment; very interesting!

U F O s:

Whitley Strieber (Beech Tree Books, 1986) 'Communion' - Strieber claims that he has been abducted from his cabin in northern New York and that these abductions have been happening to him since early childhood. Interviews with other abductees in New York City.

Budd Hopkins (Random House, 1987) 'INTRUDERS: The Incredible Visitations at Copley Woods' - Interviews with an abductee with physical evidence of a backyard landing. Finds that mother, sister, son, neighbors, girlfriend have also been abducted over the years. Suggests that UFOs are conducting genetic experiments and people are being 'bred', with the offspring removed the women of abductees on subsequent abductions. This is a followup book on UFO abductions to the author's book, MISSING TIME.

Gary Kinder (Atlantic Monthly Press, 1987) 'Light Years' - Interviews with a Swedish man who has been photographing and filming UFOs for years in the woods near his home. Photo experts have not been able to discredit these pictures. (265 p.)

OTHER READING:

H.F. Saint (Atheneum, 1987) 'Memoirs of an Invisible Man' - An investment broker is made invisible in an industrial accident and decides to elude the government to keep from becoming a 'laboratory animal'. Invisibility turns out to be cloaked in many problems! A fun book! (Soon to be a Chevy Chase movie!)

Whitley Strieber and Jim Kunetka (Holt, Rinehart, Winston, 1984) 'WarDay' - Four years after a 36-minute war with Russia, two writers set off around the country to record the condition of the U.S. and how it is reviving. A too-real scenario that gives you an understanding of how fragile our society is, and how devastating even a 'little' nuclear war would be. Kinda scary. (374 p.)

'Nature's End' (Warner Books, 1986) - This time, it's pollution that's about to end life on Earth in the 2030's. The equatorial forests are gone, the temperature's rising, weather patterns have changed, the Midwest is a desert, New York a chemical dump; only a mass-suicide of 1/3 of the Earth's population can save mankind - or is it too late? Again, another VERY thought-provoking look at man's follies and where it's leading us. Also rather scary. (418 p.) (also in paperback).

A Satisfied Customer

As a relatively long-time member of Ace St. Louis (I joined Aura originally) and a slow starter who has, like everyone learning to use the computer whether as a programmer or program user, suffered severe bouts of late-late night frustration, when, if I knew someone who could help me (and was willing to), I would have gone to bed and called them the next day. Not knowing such a person caused many a sleepless night and often unfinished projects. I don't yet have access to a modem (watch out, by the time you read this I probably will - it's on order!) so that method of gleaning information was out.

I didn't have good experience with some of the Atari shops around this area either - that is when I bought a program from them their people couldn't answer questions or help out effectively at all. Then I bought programs by mail order, Best or Target. Since Randall's Home Computers opened (by two of the most responsive, helpful and knowledgeable people I had met before they opened their own shop) I have bought programs from them, paying slightly more - but expecting real help when problems came up. They have proven their worth, saving me a lot of money and giving a new freedom of computer use I had begun to think I would never have.

Simple things, like making the printer driver on ATARIWRITER PLUS function, using all my printer's (admittedly limited) capabilities, or explaining that if I interrupt a printer dump, I need to turn the printer off and on before doing any more printing. Then of course there was the big flap because ATARIWRITER was showing less memory than I knew my computer to contain. One side says "800XL,XE" version and I didn't notice that the other side was 130XE (I have a Rambo'ed 800XL) - I needed to use the 130XE (turn the disk over you dolt!). Since I was doing a legal document with the program all this help was crucial to doing it correctly and getting it done on time. They also didn't make me feel like a dummy about it.

No, I don't buy everything from Jeff and Tim, but whenever possible - and they have been helpful with the things I haven't purchased there too. Now they have offered a place to hold the new 8 Bit SIG (We'll think of a name later), when they already host the GFA SIG. But I believe their help will be crucial to the success of the SIG - especially the invaluable information they have about "little" things that keep people from using their computers effectively.

Others in the club have offered invaluable help in the little matters, during the years - especially Terry Shoemaker, Charles Robinson, Joan Ryan, Bill Bicker and Rose Bower. Now I hope the 8 Bit SIG will pull together those with willingness to exchange information, to assist each other, because we've each inadvertently become (unbeknownst to us) experts in certain things which will help some other poor sod. There is no substitute for a group of people willing to help each other and needing help. I have found computer people unusually willing to assist each other in the past and am looking forward to more of the same.

Sandra Ankroh

Certificate Maker

by

Springboard Software

Your next door neighbor comes by, he coaches the little league team, he says "I need some kind of awards for the kids on the team, do some of your computer stuff and lets come up with something special". Well a grin crosses my face, "I have just the thing". Enter CERTIFICATE MAKER by Springboard Software. Certificate maker (CM) contains 220 different certificates, awards, licenses and humorous awards. The Certificate catalog is broken into eight different types. Unique awards such as Couch Potato Award, Worst Joke award, Best kisser award and many other leaning towards the humorous side (Including my favorite, beer connoisseurs award). Office Certificates including Best Boss award, best Secretary award and others. Academic Awards including Reading Award, Writing Award and several styles of diplomas. Sports awards including tennis, hockey, football and baseball awards. The remaining categories are Childrens certificates, religious certificates and General awards. Needless to say there is an award for everyone. Springboard has already brought out a second certificate library (which I have not seen yet).

Well lets make a certificate, you chose the certificate by number and then you start to customize it to your tastes. You chose the style lettering, the border on the certificate, you can customize the name and a small amount of text. The program is really flexible and allows some latitude in creating certificates. CM is very user freindly. The program comes with plenty of different printer drivers and just about anything you can come up with, it can print to. Well so far I haven't said much. But, the fun part comes when you print it out. The output is SPECTACULAR. The border look like they belong on a stock certificate, the lettering is fantastic and the finished product is a very professional looking document. If you are an awards oriented person, this program is a must. Then again if you just have a devious mind, like I do, this opens a lot of funny doors for you. I would stop by your favorite Computer store and ask for a demonstration of this program. I know Randall's Home computers stocks it and will show it to you. Requirements for the program are a 520St with single sided drive. Excellent program, impressive and creative. BUY it and support Springboard and hopefully they will port more of their excellent software over to the Atari ST line of computers.

Jim * gateway

NEW 8 BIT DISKS FOR AUGUST

WADE MATHEWS

ACE 40 - GRAPHICS AND SOUND DEMO'S

This is one of the Denver club disks put together by a club in Germany. It contains some new demo's we have not seen before. If you are interested in demo's of what the eight bit computers can do or you are looking for some new routines to put into your programs, this is a good disk to add to your library. Some of the information is written in German, but will not effect the use of the disk. It is easy to understand what each demo is doing without translating the text.

Side B of this disk is an interesting phone book utility. With this program and a modem you can create telephone lists, break your numbers into differesnt lists and load the list you need, find a number and have the computer dial it for you. You need only pick up the phone once the number is dialed. A very useful utility program for someone like me who cannot remember phone numbers.

ACE 41 - DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS

This is a character creation disk, a must for any D & D player. The disk allows you to create all sorts of D & D characters, players and non players, adjusting their strengths, intelligence and much more. I cannot give a just review due to my lack of interest in this type of program, but it appears to be very detailed taking up both sides of the disk. If there is someone willing to do a review of this disk let us know and we will make arrangements.

ACE 42 PUBLIC DOMAIN GAMES DISK

This disk, also courtesy of the Denver group contains quite a few public domain board games on the front side. I found the Keno game to be the most interesting. It gives you the feeling of playing the Lottery without the expense. You will also find Dice, Solitaire, roulette and others.

Side B contains a Football game. This is a two player text style basic game played with joysticks. It involves some thinking and stradeegy. More for the older crowd that does not need the graphics to keep their attention and who sant a game with a challenge to out think the other player.

Music Disk

Greg Kopchak has put together another music disk which may be available at the August meeting if I can get together with him before then, otherwise, you can look forward to it at the next meeting.

CHICAGO ATARIFEST CANCELLED

BY Gerry Feld

THIS IS A NOTICE THAT THE ATARIFEST, ORIGINALLY SCHEDULED FOR CHICAGO ON THE 25TH AND 26TH OF JULY, 1987, HAS BEEN OFFICIALLY CANCELLED.

There were several reasons for doing this, but FIRST and FOREMOST, let me dispell three major rumors that have been spread about the 'Fest in Chicago.

FIRST: The 'Fest in Chicago did NOT at ANY time have any problems with the unions. This is a rumor spread out of Michigan through a misunderstanding on their part, and has not at any time been true. SECOND: Last Spring, a Wisconsin group started rumors that the Chicago 'Fest was cancelled - at THAT time. WRONG! It may be now, but not previously.

THIRD AND FOREMOST: ATARI DID NOT PULL THE PLUG ON THE CHICAGO FEST. The decision to pull the plug was made by the two Chicago area groups that did all of their work - Lake County Atari Computer Enthusiasts (LCACE), and the ChicagoLand Atari User's Group (CLAUG). It is my understanding from Neil Harris, that at least one downstate Illinois group has been spreading the 'Word' (read RUMOR) that Atari Corp. pulled the plug. Not true. Atari DID advise us that if the fest looked real shaky that it might be best to drop the show and reschedule, but it was our decision. This we chose to do.

WHY THE 'FEST FAILED - There are several reasons why the 'fest failed. We had planned the show to be held in a local Ramada Inn. Now, I don't know how much of a guarantee other groups in hotels had to give, but the best deal we could come up with was a 100 room per night guarantee plus a substantial fee for the 12700 sq. ft. hall. This IS high compared to other cities, but very reasonable around here. We went with this for several reasons. There were NO unions to consider. The Hotel was within a couple blocks of O'hare airport, and within a mile of several Interstate highways. Food and rooms were available on the premisses.

To cover the expenses of the hall, booths, power, etc., we had to have a minimum of 30 vendors to pass the break-even point. As of 15 June, only 5 had bothered to commit with money - the rest gave a bunch of excuses about not scheduling budgets more than 30 days in advance, and the like. What these companies fail to realize is that we needed their downpayments in advance so we could cover our own expenses. What it finally came down to was that we were looking at a \$6000.00 commitment for the hotel alone, with only 5 vendors. Our phone calls and letters to the lagging companies failed to do any good - they wouldn't even send a downpayment. Last October when Sandi was in town, we were told that if we had trouble getting vendors to commit, that Atari would give them a push for us. In May, we went to Sandi, and were told then that she couldn't do that, and we were on our own. We found out too late from Neil Harris, that this was NOT the official Atari position.

Secondly, The groups involved were spread out over too wide an area. In all, there were over 300 miles between the northernmost (Militari) and southernmost (BASE) groups with CLAUG, LCACE, SCAT, and RACC in between. Those of you who are thinking about organizing a fest, keep that in mind. It is impossible to keep in good contact over a large distance without running up extraordinarily large phone or gas bills. We also had a problem with meeting attendance. When the meetings were held after the Suburban Chicago (SCAT) meetings, almost all six groups attended (except Militari, who only attended two or three meetings through the whole course of events). When the meetings were unanimously scheduled after the CLAUG or LCACE meetings, SCAT, RACC, and Militari never showed up - even when there was no conflict with their own meetings - and these accounted for half of the committee meetings. You cannot communicate if you don't show up for the meetings. Bear in mind that all attending groups agreed on the next meeting dates and places before a time and place was definitely set.

Lastly, if a group volunteers to perform a specific job, it is up to them to make sure it is done. In our case, Militari volunteered to copy and compile the packet for our second mailings. After they volunteered, we never heard from them again. The Suburban Chicago group volunteered to do the first and second mailings to vendors, and the mailing to dealers - in short, to fill the hall with exhibitors. They also volunteered to do all the printing and the ticket design to help fulfil the obligations of the Rockford group. The second vendor package mailings were eventually done by LCACE instead of Militari and SCAT, and the printing was done by CLAUG and LCACE. To top it off, we found out on 6 June that the tickets had not even been designed yet - much less had any printed for pre-show sales (a VITAL part of our plan,) nor had they done any dealer mailings - after telling us for well over a month that it had all been taken care of.

In view of the short time before we could no longer cancel, the lack of support from Sandi, absolutely NO advance ticket sales and the fact that we were hitting a stone wall with vendors (other than the 5 we had) we decided to cancel. We are currently thinking of completely re-organizing the committee with a rescheduled date next year, but nothing has been decided yet. If we do reschedule, you can bet there will be several MAJOR changes made from the first attempt.

If you have any questions, comments, or (hopefully) suggestions, leave mail on GENIE to G.FEID, on CompuServe to number 74146,162, or on the 'Once In A BLUE MOON' BBS at 312-457-2219 - 24 hours a day, 300/1200 baud.

This article taken from the Database Zmag files Available on GATEWAY BBS (314) 647-3290



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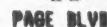
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